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THE CARROT OR THE STICK:  
REFLECTIONS ON THE REFORM PROCESS  
IN SOUTH AFRICA

Lawrence Schlemmer

Centre for Applied Social Sciences

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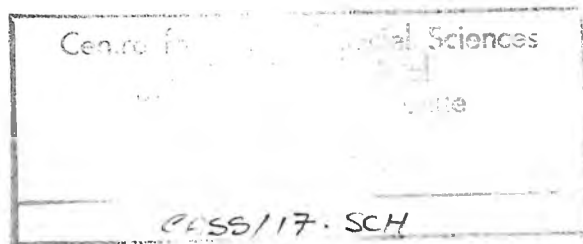
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Durban

Presidential Address to the South African Institute of Race  
Relations on 7th September, 1984 in Johannesburg

South Africa is again passing through a phase of open violence. News of over thirty people killed in township unrest in the Vaal Triangle has come amidst accounts of spreading school boycotts, of simmering tensions between Inkatha and UDF-linked groupings in the Durban area and an unprecedented spate of sabotage of government installations and some private homes in townships.

Reactions to these events are predictable. Anxious or gleeful forecasts of impending political conflagration will once again gain a gloss of credibility until the South African security firehoses once again douse the most visible flames. The government and some of the media will blame activists and agitators, and all sorts of opposition groupings will blame government policy. Both will be right as usual. Nothing much will alter and life will grind on until the next rash of unrest. History is likely to go on repeating itself.

The tension of unresolved conflict in South Africa and its sporadic but tragic eruptions perhaps demands more than most of the analyses and prescriptions which the popular liberal and radical debate peddles to converted audiences. If we are serious about peaceful change we should perhaps try to rethink assumptions about change and search for new possibilities of being effective. This analysis is one of such attempts. It certainly does not pretend to have all the answers but hopefully may help to stimulate the thinking in reform circles which appears to be so urgently required.

In this assessment two major questions will be posed. Firstly, is South Africa on a path of reform and change which is likely to accumulate to ensure peace, stability and development in the future? Secondly, are the activities and organisations which are aimed at encouraging appropriate forms of change becoming more effective in achieving their goals? These are questions

which the South African Institute of Race Relations, as one of the foremost "change organisations" over the past 50 years, must pose pertinently and prominently as often as it can.

### 1. Change: The Key Issues.

In a recent nation-wide sample survey among 550 African industrial workers, this author posed a simple question which went as follows: *"Think of the present time in South Africa - everything that is happening. Is life for you improving, staying the same or getting worse?"* The proportions of the African workers who felt that life-chances were improving, staying constant or deteriorating were 16 percent, 24 percent and 60 percent respectively. This no more than confirms many other impressions that a majority of blacks feel that conditions are deteriorating. At a time of recession this is perhaps only to be expected, and nearly all the people interviewed in the survey mentioned economic factors and unemployment. Over 50 percent of those who felt that life chances were deteriorating, however, also mentioned political concerns and government policy towards Africans in giving reasons for their answers. The housing shortage was another very prominent factor. The final test of policy is its impact on ordinary people and in South Africa today reform has not yet penetrated adequately to the rank and file.

The following seem to be key aspects of the problem. Influx control, although liberalised to some extent for people with urban rights in the wake of the Riekert Commission proposals, still requires Africans to grapple with officialdom and bureaucratic red tape in organising their lives. The mode of operation of the pass laws still creates the overwhelming impression that life chances are at the mercy of an organisation which, despite changes in its name, has consistently operated like a vast "compound management" in urban African life over the past twenty years.

For Africans without urban rights, recent Appeal Court judgements have no more than re-established a right which existed until 1968; the right to earn urban rights through long and faithful service in urban employment. Here again the right can only be claimed after grappling with what some would term a highly resistant bureaucracy.

The crux of the problem of African administration in the common area lies in the fact that bureaucratic regulations can still criminalise individuals who are doing no more than seeking to optimise their life chances. Pass law arrests continue at a high level in a society whose leadership has recently taken to reaffirming its commitment to a private enterprise system with almost boring regularity. Free enterprise, however, is almost as remote today for the ordinary African wishing to sell his or her labour and establish a residence as it ever has been.

African local government and local planning and development in black areas has recently been placed on a much sounder legislative basis, allowing for greater participation by black communities. The financial provision for the new local authorities has yet to be clarified, however, many months since the legislation was promulgated. The very low poll in the most recent African local government elections demonstrated very clearly that ordinary people are as yet unconvinced about the merits of the system.

African housing in the common area, and in most of the urban areas in the homelands is another key problem area. The shortage of housing is calculated to be anything up to almost 600 000 units. The expansion of housing is bedevilled by shortages of land and of serviced sites, reluctance by building societies to grant loans to Africans who cannot enjoy normal freehold tenure, the high cost of loan finance, severe financial constraints on the state and the fact that homes of an official minimum

standard are beyond the means of most ordinary employed Africans. The solution to this problem requires some bold new thinking.

In a modern industrial state education is the main road to progress, occupational advancement and material improvement. The critical significance of education is keenly recognised by blacks. In the survey research conducted for the Buthelezi Commission, a sample of over 800 people in the Transvaal and Natal were asked what things the government should do to *"improve the lives of Africans today"*. They ranked equality of education first, ahead of encouraging higher incomes and abolishing influx control, and well ahead of curbing price rises, the franchise, improved housing provision and the release of black leaders from prison. For whites and the authorities, the ongoing boycotts and disruption of African schools also highlight the keynote significance of education. One is aware that the government has made considerable effort to upgrade African education since 1976 but in recent years the pass rates in the standard 10 and matriculation examinations have dropped steadily down to 48 and 10 percent respectively last year. The reasons are complex and the whole issue is highly problematic but one certainly cannot anticipate any significant improvement in the next few years.

Finally in this short list of problems one arrives at political rights for Africans. The absence of any real progress in regard to constitutional rights for Africans has been underscored by the recent extension of parliamentary franchise of a type to coloured and Indian people only. In a statement in Race Relations News made just before the Referendum on the new dispensation among whites, I conceded that the new constitution had aspects of considerable significance for change. I also expressed the view, however, that for those people taking a broader view of South Africa's critical needs for stability and change it could not be supported unless the government were to at least issue a clear statement of intent about constitutional

rights for Africans in the central legislature.

On numerous occasions the government has referred to ongoing investigations, consultations and planning by a Cabinet committee. It has not once, to the best of my knowledge, given the assurance that Africans have a right to some form of representation at the central level of government in the Republic. This omission has led to a wide-spread mobilisation of black opinion against the new constitution and has contributed to very low polls in the recent coloured and Indian elections. It has also provided an opportunity for a vote against South Africa in the Security Council of the United Nations and has allowed a range of organisations abroad to claim that apartheid is strengthened by the recent constitutional developments.

These are the key issues: educational opportunity, freedom of movement, the provision of opportunities for shelter, participation and the recognition of basic rights to citizenship. They are the issues on which our progress in reform will be judged. What are the prospects for change in these areas?

## 2. Change: the Prospects in the Short to Medium Term.

In attempting to answer the question posed above two basic points must be made at the outset. The first is that in any society in which the state retains cohesion, the loyalty of key personnel and the ability to control most major resources one should not readily anticipate revolution nor a moral conversion or sweeping, fearful reform from the government. The South African state may have problems of international credibility and internal acceptability among most blacks, there may be widespread youth dissidence and the government may also have enormous fiscal and financial problems to solve but we would be foolish to imagine that it is losing its grip. It has enormous unused reserves of power to control and coerce if necessary and it knows how to use them. No dissidence over

the past 10 years has gained the peak of commitment from adult blacks that one saw in the finally unsuccessful "*defiance campaign*" of the late fifties, when the South African state was much weaker and less skilled in the control of dissidence.

Writing in a recent issue of *Optima* Simon Jenkins, political editor of *The Economist* makes much the same point rather more crisply. The imagery of the inevitability of revolution in South Africa has been so powerful that "*all normal standards of political analysis were abandoned. - - - The suggestion that white rule in South Africa is not imminently doomed is therefore treated not as a political judgement, but as an admission of original sin - - - By failing to disentangle moral feelings from proper analysis, Western observers produced predictions that were simply wrong*". Jenkins' applies a more rigorous analysis and concludes that "*It is now abundantly clear that what is now termed the white tribe of Africa will be in rough and ready control of South Africa for the foreseeable future*".

Cold, realistic analysis would suggest that change strategies which assume an imminent collapse of white authority are either futile or in some cases counter-productive. It is also only realistic to accept that most if not all of the change which the government introduces will be of a strategic kind, aimed at resolving inconsistencies or contradictions which affect its administration, efficiency or credibility among its own supporters or groups on which it is dependent. Each successive individual reform of this type can quite easily and justifiably be labelled as an attempt to stabilise the situation or to co-opt new support groups. The significance of such change lies not in its moral import, but rather in its cumulative effect. As a state manipulates its environment in this way it creates new precedents with each successive reform. This, after all, is how human rights and democracy emerged in the West; a process by which ruling classes absorbed more and



more groups and strata into their broader sphere of interests.

This view is not a denial of basic differences of interests between groups or of the salience of conflict in society. It is simply to state the obvious historical truth that conflict has frequently been absorbed rather than resolved in open antagonism. One can expect therefore, that every specific reform in South Africa will be seen by those not included in it as a strategic ploy to strengthen the system of white domination. I have no doubt that if we avoid a revolution we could well see a day on which a multi-racial cabinet will appoint a black Vice-President amidst howls of outrage at the latest "*trick*" of the white ruling class. I am not defending this possibility -- it is simply an often repeated historical precedent elsewhere which we should be mindful of.

Hence, the fact that the state is presently attempting to "*co-opt*" coloured and Indian moderates into its sphere of interest is by no means a sign of any change of heart on the part of the government, but equally it is also by no means the last group it will co-opt.

The second basic point I wish to make follows from (or perhaps precedes) the first. This is that no matter how faulty or fitful the reform performance of the South African state has been, it has in recent years demonstrated the kind of pragmatism and instrumental rationality necessary for change to be possible under its rule. The changes in labour legislation following the Wiehahn Commission in 1979 and the subsequent emergence of an officially acknowledged and potentially very powerful new union movement have demonstrated this. The shift in the way urban Africans in the common area are viewed is another example. While no political consequences at anything other than the local level have flowed from this, the change from the view of these Africans as temporary sojourners whose townships have to be kept rudimentary lest the Africans flock towards the "*honey pots*" to the present acceptance of Africans as a permanent

population in "white" areas is a significant shift.

Incomplete as all this may be, it at least demonstrates the possibility of a process of change which could yield substantial reform in the future. The old notion so typical of the Verwoerd era of a granite-like resistance to any change or deviation from an established political charter is simply no longer relevant.

Given these two basic viewpoints it might be expected that I will proceed to predict a process of accumulating reform in the short to medium term future, albeit very instrumental and directed at stabilising the conditions under which white privilege operates. Not so at all. There are particular impediments in the way of reform which will be very resistant to the logic I have sketched above. The first concerns the perceived role of Afrikaners and of whites as a group in our future society and the second concerns some very basic values about the kind of society we are, and to some equally basic anxieties which whites experience. I will relate these impediments to the critical areas for reform which were identified earlier.

## 2-1 Impediments to Change: Ethnic Mobilisation and Constitutional Possibilities

The changes which have taken place over the last decade have not impinged on the key political interests of the government. This is its power advantage as an organised Afrikaner establishment. All the constitutional proposals which have emanated from the government thusfar have one key feature in common — the protection of the separate basis for ethnic political organisation by Afrikaners in co-operation with other white supporters. There is no sign whatsoever that this structure is open to negotiation.

The major question which arises is whether or not this structure of political interest is synonymous with white

or Afrikaner domination. It certainly is at the present time but need not necessarily always remain so. Ethnic parties can form coalitions with other formations as we have seen in the Hertzog-Smuts government and in the Nationalist party - Labour party coalition of earlier times. More generally, the amount of power wielded by an ethnic formation is probably more negotiable than the political structures which guarantee its survival, coherence and significance in the policy.

What I am saying is that the National party is more likely to negotiate some degree of power sharing in which it retains its political identity and role than it is ever likely to negotiate around any arrangements which imply that it could become simply another party among many others without any guaranteed role in the legislative process. Put differently, whites as individuals can be offered as many guarantees of security and the protection of their interests as one can think of, but without the organised Afrikaner political formation being offered some formal role in the polity such guarantees will have little effect.

The new constitution, for example, has been designed around this fundamental interest. It could, of course, fail miserably, leaving nothing but white domination again, but it could lead to a National party - Labour party governing coalition which might involve substantial power concessions from whites.

## 2-2 Education: Separate Cannot be Equal

Numerous investigations and analyses have made it quite clear that the black educational system is becoming increasingly overstressed. Between 1973 and 1983 there was a 1200% increase in the number of African pupils in the final year at high school. Given the fact that African education suffers from a vicious circle of personnel deficiencies (poor results = few suitable

teacher-training students = shortage of qualified teachers = poor results) aggravated by poor facilities and resources, incremental improvements in funding and resource-provision may not even keep pace with the increasing stress on the system.

What is required is a structural change in the system whereby the resources, expertise and even some personnel in the educational systems for the more advantaged groups become available for the upgrading of African education. This implies a degree of integration of the different educational systems.

This comes into direct conflict with another basic principle in South African socio-political organisation as defined by most whites; this being ethnic community autonomy and separation. The school is one of the most valued and protected of community institutions and quite obviously great resistance to any moves to integrate schools can be expected. In fact the government's unwillingness to introduce even simply a single administering body for the separate systems, as recommended by the De Lange investigation, is a measure of the sensitivity of the issue.

The question arises, however, as to whether or not critically needed reform in African education has to wait for this very large socio-political impediment to dissipate. Are there not ways in which the different educational systems can pool and share resources and personnel while retaining their identity? One possibility is academic and technical high schools for blacks established jointly by the various education authorities as special projects. Another possibility is adult education centres for after hours black students run jointly by the different authorities.

### 2-3 African housing and Influx Control: First World or Third World Solutions

South Africa is a "settler society" in which the European component has become just as identified with the sub-continent as in the case of any other former settler society like the USA, Argentine or Australia. As with those countries, the dominant perception of the new society by the former settler communities is that it is what historians have called a "fragment" of the European societies or origin. In fact, the mental images of the former settlers is that their society is an improved version of Europe in its life styles, planning and traditions. This very deeply established collective mental model of the society impinges directly on any attempts to solve the housing crisis for Africans and to liberalise influx control, in addition to the socio-political considerations already discussed.

The huge backlog of African housing provision in and around our cities and the problem of accommodating more African rural-urban migrants under a rational urbanisation policy can both only be resolved if whites and the authorities are prepared to adopt a radically different view of the character of South African cities and to see them in part at least as Third world cities, which they are. Very basic self-help housing with a minimum of basic facilities, the recognition of an informal sector operating inside the cities with roadside market stalls and even the recognition of informal residents' associations as a form of local authority are the keys to the solution of otherwise untractable problems. These types of systems are much spoken about today, but are not as yet accepted by the cross-section of officialdom concerned. Even when spoken or written about, the models which are presented are frequently a concession to "western standards" and hence are too elaborate or expensive to provide the large-scale solutions which are required.

There is also much evidence of a collective white fear of any concentration of Africans near white spheres of influence which is not administered and controlled along very orderly lines. The African "compound" of earlier times is still a value-model in the minds of most whites.

This is all very ironic in the light of the fact that from the mid nineteen-fifties onwards the majority of our worst and most noticable social disruptions have taken place in the meticulously controlled and very "western" environments of the black schools and planned black townships. These contradictions have not tarnished the symbolism in the minds of whites, however.

#### 2-4 Whose Interests?

The impediments to reform which I have identified are what one may term socio-political or socio-cultural values and interests. This does not mean that material factors like class interests do not feature in my model of conflict. The specific class interests of owners and managers in industry can be and are pursued in a variety of policy contexts, however, and there is no longer a discernable capitalist interest in segregation, constrained urbanisation or exclusive white political domination. There is, obviously, a capitalist interest in stability in our society, but this is so widely shared with other white interest groups that it cannot be specifically called a capitalist concern, particularly since the alternative to white rule is not necessarily socialist rule. Some industrial management may also avoid contradicting the authorities for fear of running into operating problems or losing state contracts. None of these motives appear to reflect a significant capitalist interest in maintaining race segregation and race separation as policies, however.

There is, however, one "class" which has its interests admirably served in the present structure of our socio-political system. It is also a "class" with far greater coherence and internal communication and a clearer focus of interests than capitalists

in South Africa today. This is the bureaucratic class which as we know is very large in South Africa compared with most other non-socialist societies.

Planned and closely administered systems represent distinct spheres of opportunity for bureaucrats (often called "empires") and obviously the more separation there is along ethnic lines, the more "empires" can exist. These comments are a little unfair because some of the most dedicated and skilled functionaries I know are public sector bureaucrats. Nevertheless, alternative systems have some very real implications for the bureaucratic establishment which can never be overlooked in change analysis.

### 3. Reform Strategy: the Challenges

What the points made above suggest to me is that change and reform is probably not going to be an evenly accumulating or steady incremental process in our country. Some reforms of a substantial kind have occurred and they have demonstrated a certain rationality in our policy system. These reforms, however, have brought us closer to what one may term the "crunch issues" referred to earlier as basic impediments. The new constitutional dispensation is the clearest case in point.

The legitimacy of the new constitution (to its architects at least) lies in its demographic base, reflected in the proportions of MP's in the separate chambers, giving the well-known ratio's of roughly 4:2:1. This arrangement both represents numbers of people and, no matter how it mutates internally, provides a powerful guarantee that a dominant white party will be able to protect its power position and its basis of mobilisation. Obviously the same legitimating formula cannot be extended to Africans; not even urban Africans, who clearly outnumber whites. Alternative legitimating formulae are not easy to find and therefore we cannot expect that Africans will be offered an incorporation similar to that for coloureds and Indians once the present system has settled down and new pressures to incorporate Africans have built up. There will probably be a hiatus in the political reform process.

Have the opposition or change-orientated formations, both formal and informal, inside and outside South Africa, the energy and the strategy to work against the type of impediment I have outlined? I will not attempt a comprehensive assessment but some evaluation is necessary, under the following headings:

### 3-1 Sabotage and Insurgency

Countries abroad like Israel, Ulster and certain Latin American States have demonstrated a capacity to endure very high levels of insurgency. Given this fact as well as the sophisticated counter-insurgency in South Africa, the new peace accords with neighbour states which insulate the borders to some extent and the fact that in order to become more effective sabotage also has to become more brutal and less attractive to internal supporters, then this form of pressure does not appear likely to be very effective in producing change, whether peaceful or bloody. In fact, a certain level of sabotage may even be indirectly functional for white rule since it creates a unity of sentiment and purpose among whites.

### 3-2 Economic Embargoes

There is clearly increasing activism in pursuit of external disinvestment, trade boycotts and other economic pressures in the USA in particular. If successful such programmes could reduce South Africa's access to new technology, marginally reduce our rate of economic growth and undermine confidence in the economy externally and internally. The success of such programmes will never be substantial, however, since alternative capital and markets for products are usually available even if on less attractive terms and therefore possibly inflationary in impact. Certain internal consequences are of greater importance, however.

Strong external pressures usually have the effect of mobilising support around a strong, patriotic government. Whites will become



more united and more solidary. As the economy suffers, black unemployment will rise, robbing the new union movements of some of their leverage. People who are unemployed for a long time tend to sink back into an obsession with material survival, and political apathy, with the exception of the youth whose parents support them.

The South African State has clear priorities and in contrast to the dwindling resources among blacks, it will mobilise its resources and shift emphasis from non-essential expenditure to security affairs and perhaps even institute state subsidisation of various kinds of strategic production.

The disinvestment and external boycott strategy probably can be calculated to have what one could call a U effect. When pressures are mild to moderate it probably has a moral effect which is positive for change. As pressures become more intense and more effective in hurting the South African economy, however, internal black resources are weakened and a more unified white establishment will mobilise against the pressures. From here on the strategy, in order to regain effectiveness, has to press through in an attempt to cause an economic and political collapse in South Africa. This, obviously, is the effect that some of the more active protagonists of disinvestment and boycott would like to see. There are two problems, however. Firstly the extreme effect is very unlikely to be achieved. Secondly in its more advanced form it is not a reform strategy but one aimed at violent revolution since it would by then already have forced the government and the white establishment into a no-compromise, back-to-the-wall survival orientation which could only be broken by total revolution.

### 3.3 "Hot" Internal Opposition

The archetype of what I term "hot" internal opposition was the defiance campaign and its aftermath of the late fifties and early sixties. It has some parallels today in aspects of the anti-election campaigns, rent demonstrations, school boycotts and the like. It has its active side and also its symbolic side in which "hot"

rhetoric accompanies or takes the place of confrontations and active demonstrations.

In South Africa outbreaks of this more intense opposition are only to be expected and are quite understandable given the general lack of response to milder forms of protest. Hot rhetoric also has its functions in a change process since it offers more moderate reform action a certain degree of protection (the latter appears much more constructive in contrast).

There are, however, certain features of this type of action which have negative consequences. Firstly, the demonstrations are usually of a type which invite counter-reaction by the police and the authorities. There are few governments in the world which will tolerate civil disobedience if it can lead to violence or damage to property. Given the overwhelming strength of the security apparatus in South Africa such demonstrations are likely to be crushed sooner or later. For the ordinary participants and the rank-and-file spectators in the black townships this course of events may reinforce the impression that the system is too powerful to oppose. Defeat after intense mobilisation and demonstrations can also very easily demoralise the rank-and-file participants. In other words this type of action is not able to be sustained.

Secondly, the tendency as in many countries in the world today is for participants in such demonstrations to be younger adults, school leavers and even school children, not only in school boycotts but also in rent and bus strikes. This has recently been the case once again in disturbances in Lamontville, Chesterville and most recently in the Vaal Triangle, where there was considerable loss of life. The high visibility of youth and, with some exceptions, the relative inactivity of the older householders has some problems. Such action lends itself easily to the accusations that gullible and restless young people are being exploited for political ends. The demonstrations themselves suffer a loss of credibility — young people, for example, do not have to pay the rents they are

they are protesting about. To the extent that the demonstrators prevent the more mature adults from getting to work, tensions can be created between generations in the black communities, which were in ample evidence in the 1976 demonstrations when migrant workers attacked youthful demonstrators. In other words these demonstrations seldom reflect community mobilisation around issues and strategies which can involve a sustained, community-wide response.

Thirdly, where such types of demonstrations occur on a widespread basis and achieve a high visibility in the media (which is presumably in line with the goals of the organisers) they can create a reaction among whites which is not supportive of reform. An analysis of white voter preferences on the basis of opinion polls reported in *Indicator SA*, Vol 1, No 2 1983 shows clearly that the 1976 township disturbances were associated with a fall-off in support for the Progressive Federal Party among whites and a swing of English speaking voters to the National Party.

Taking these factors into consideration leads one to question whether "hot" resistance of this type within the present South African context achieves anywhere near an effect on change which warrants the risks and loss of life which is so often involved.

### 3-4 Constituency or Community Mobilisation

There are few examples of this to refer to in change strategies, but what there are indicate that there are fairly dynamic possibilities for change in this type of response. One example, by analogy in a sense, is to be found in the new union movement which mobilised from 1972 onwards. By definition there was a clear constituency, the African industrial worker. Recruitment and mobilisation took place on the basis of issues which made sense to the vast majority of potential members — wages, working conditions and disciplinary procedures in industry. There was relatively great concern with matters of organisation and education of members, and although organisational problems have always been present, the organisational coherence established has been sufficient to the tasks of the movement. The goals which were set were achievable in a sufficient number of cases to support the

mounting credibility of the movement. Political connections with revolutionary movements were avoided or played down. The arena of action was within an established institutional framework or nexus (industry, the state Department of Labour, etc) which provided possibilities of formal recognition from the outset. Most importantly, perhaps, the demands made were negotiable; they were not so large as to invite committed total rejection from the outset. Despite active government opposition to union organisation in the early stages, with bannings and harrassment, the credibility of the movement won through within a few years so that eventually the government itself decided to take the matter seriously enough to appoint the Wiehahn Commission, out of which formal recognition of the emergent union movement resulted.

Another model of response is Inkatha. This organisation is embroiled in great controversy with the UDF at present but there is no need to debate those specific problems at this point. What is relevant to this discussion is simply the basic model of action. This organisation is also linked in with a formal institutional framework (the non-independent KwaZulu regional government), although it extends beyond it into township organisation in the Transvaal, for example. The formal institutional framework creates possibilities of recognition by and negotiation with the authorities. The major strategy, however, is very large mass membership, currently standing at a claimed figure of 980 000. The effects of mass membership on the credibility of the organisation and on the respect or caution which it is likley to engender in central government are obvious. The major political demands of the organisation, although hitherto rejected by the government, are also not so unrealistic or large as to be non-negotiable at some future date. There are obviously possibilities in this type of strategy as well which will be referred to presently.

Although it seems curious to say this at the present time of school boycotts and scattered township disturbances, there is really very little effective African pressure for change on the government

of a type to which the government is likely to be able to respond. The pressures that do exist are such that if the government were to respond it would seem to be rewarding civil disruption. Such pressures have to be very large indeed before any government can be expected to grant any concessions. The two examples of constituency based mobilisation given above would suggest that community pressure of a more effective type is possible. Apart from current political symbolism among progressive movements (which is not necessarily functional) there is no major reason which I can discern as to why the new African local government system in the urban areas could not provide an institutional framework within which community-based parties could mobilise and formulate demands for negotiation.

At the present time the public representatives enjoy little popular credibility (the polls in the last election were around 10 percent) and given the low support base, the local councillors can easily be manipulated by the authorities for their own interests. If there was constituency organisation and community-based public vigilance, however, the local councillors could become as relevant to African community life as trade unions are to African industrial life.

These proposals as well as the argument that Inkatha may have the structural basis for a successful strategy are likely to be regarded as akin to heresy by popular thinking in most liberal and radical opposition ranks. Collaboration with the system has become stigmatised as reflecting not only strategic misjudgement but moral turpitude of the worst order. This attitude is perfectly understandable for an organisation committed to the violent overthrow of the government, but is less understandable among liberals and among people whose thinking is sufficiently sophisticated to realise that an overthrow of the South African government is a fairly remote option at this stage.

One must concede that mobilisation around state institutions like local authorities and non-independent homeland governments

involves certain fairly serious risks. The greatest risk is that the participants will be drawn into activities and commitments which will give credibility to government policy. Another serious risk is that the government will manipulate the participants in such a way as to serve its own policy ends in the long run. These risks cannot be taken lightly.

The fact that I have emphasised constituency mobilisation, however, to my mind is a counter to these risks. Here again the emergent trade unions are illustrative. Some of these unions have elected to work within the institutional framework of the Industrial Council system and most of the unions use formal state institutions like the Industrial Court. Throughout the industrial west, but particularly in centrally planned economies, trade unions face a constant risk of becoming incorporated in such a way as to stabilise industrial relations at the cost of popular worker interests. Trade unions as "Junior partners" of management are always possible when the organisations become bureaucratic and formalised. The fact that so many unions in the west have avoided this role, however, is due in large measure to pressure and vigilance from the organised popular constituency.

Using the leverage offered by formal institutions is always like walking a tightrope. Without the balancing rod of an organised constituency it is indeed hazardous. With the support and vigilance of organised constituents, however, this strategy may be one of the few courses to peaceful but significant change available in South Africa today. The stereotyping of this alternative as a sellout to government interests is a piece of superficial opposition wisdom which needs serious logical inspection.

### 3-5 Protest, Communication and Negotiation

We come here to a range of activities traditionally engaged in by change organisation, including churches, voluntary associations, business organisations, the press and academics. Protest activity is

as old as modern politics in South Africa and by common agreement has generally not been significantly effective in influencing successive governments. There is no doubt, however, that the effectiveness of this type of communication is probably increased by the following (The concepts of protest, communication and negotiation are used simultaneously since they overlap extensively):

- \* the credibility of the information presented as an argument for change. This highlights the need for rigorous research and fact-finding. Credible information carried with it an intrinsic legitimacy which will move politicians to caution, if nothing else;
- \* the credibility and support of the organisation doing the protesting or communication. Hence a strong editorial in a large national newspaper is more effective than a pamphlet produced by a small voluntary organisation. Furthermore, when a large organisation protests, that communication will lack effectiveness if it is perceived to be outside the scope of its competence or if the membership is not seen to be fully behind the protest. The South African Council of Churches, for example, is probably not as effective in protest as many would like it to be because conservative audiences doubt whether the mass of affiliated church members are committed in their support of the protest. The Urban Foundation, on the other hand, was established expressly for the purpose of improving the quality of black life and its communications are generally perceived to have the full backing of the business community which sponsors it;
- \* protest and communication will gain effectiveness if it is seen to be aligned with or supported by some other organisation or formation which has credibility. A community protest, for example, would enjoy increased weight if backed by a trade union federation;

- \* protesters are easily discredited if their bona-fides can be questioned. Where a protest is mounted by a group known to have a much wider or far-reaching political agenda, that protest will have less effect. Organisations which see protest and/or communication as their main means of achieving an effect should therefore avoid becoming associated or linked with organisations with more sweeping goals. For this reasons there is great merit in an organisation taking opportunities to reassure the government of its bona fides, no matter how tough its protests may be. Personal communication with the authorities is obviously beneficial, since communication across a wide gulf of misunderstandings must obviously be futile;
- \* the framework within which communication takes place is of very great significance. The authorities tend to see issues within a framework of bureaucratic rules which are imposed by their role. If an item of communication suggests that the framework is irrelevant then obviously they will ignore it. A piece of communication must acknowledge the framework and then provide a motivation as to why the rules should be bent or the framework widened;
- \* where the communicating or protesting organisation has something to offer then a form of negotiation and/or mediation becomes possible. An organisation may enjoy effective contacts and credibility both with the authorities and in a black community and may be able to either act as an intermediary or negotiate on behalf of one of the parties. There are numerous situations in South Africa in which mediation could serve a vital purpose and could have enormously beneficial effects. Organisations which see scope for this type of role for themselves have to try to ensure that they maintain some credibility on both sides of the official fences.

These seem to me to be a few basic rules applicable in the sphere of activity which has come to be known colloquially as the "change industry". These suggested rules are not easy to follow in practice.



Enormously strong and subtle pressures are placed on organisations to distantiate themselves symbolically either from the authorities or from the black opposition formations. People or organisations who do not do so are quickly labelled as "sellouts" or "activists". Speaking for a moment specifically in regard to the South Africa Institute of Race Relations, my own view is that symbolic politics have to be respected but resisted. An organisation in our position which throws its whole lot in with one party or another either becomes a victim itself or joins the establishment. Either way, given the realities of the situation, it loses a great deal of effect.

#### 4. Conclusions and Thoughts on a Framework for Democratic Change

The title of this assessment is "The Carrot or the Stick". The foregoing analysis of change strategies has suggested that some of the sticks with the most lethal appearance may not be as effective as some forms of popular wisdom assume. If sustained, constituency-based and possibly institutionalised pressure on the system can be regarded as a stick, however, then at least one type of stick should be used which has not been employed sufficiently. Protest and change-orientated communication is not really in the category of sticks; the evaluation above suggests that the more it looks like a stick the less effective it may be (although the carrot may need a sharp point). Negotiation and mediation always involve carrots and their effect, I believe, can be great. These carrots are extremely difficult to grow, however. Briefly, then, I have concluded that both the carrot and the stick are required, provided the sticks are not simply flailed around wildly at a distance or mainly by vulnerable schoolchildren and unemployed youths.

More seriously, I have concluded that there are indeed aspects of symbolic politics in South Africa which are counter-productive. Since my analysis has probably already made me unpopular with both conservatives and more progressive elements, I would like to risk even greater unpopularity by concluding with a few thoughts which challenge holy cows on both sides.

Very fundamentally the politics of protest and change in South Africa has been the politics of estrangement, more often than not operating outside a framework which could allow some dialogue, albeit tough, with the government. Extra-parliamentary oppositions in South Africa have as a consequence been at great risk of drifting off into empty rhetoric, violent posturing or apathy.

One of the main reasons for this is that these oppositions have had to reject totally the framework for policy formation employed by the government. At the root of this rejection lie two goals of the government which are totally non-negotiable to the vast majority of those black people who find themselves ranged behind extra-parliamentary opposition. These two goals are "ethnicity" and "denationalisation". In rejecting these the extra-parliamentary opposition groupings have also rejected all structures which give form to these goals, like homeland government, black urban authorities, the Presidents' Council and the like. The result has been impasse and total lack of communication.

My assessment of the situation in its widest reality is that the approach can be modified. One can reject imposed ethnicity and the denationalisation of Africans implied by homeland independence without necessarily totally rejecting all government institutions. Today there are more and more voices in the government camp which question the realism of an ethnic solution and of the permanent denial of full citizenship to Africans. These influences, however, are not prepared to retract every policy initiative that has occurred so far and are not prepared to retract on the goals of Afrikaner ethnic politics. In regard to some of the structures which have been created in terms of policy, there are also the interests of the very powerful bureaucracy to consider, as mentioned previously.

Non-independent homeland government, for example, has been conceived of as a stage in the process of denationalisation. If the ultimate

objective of independence is firmly excluded, however, this form of government can be seen in a totally different light; as a form of decentralised regional government for areas of the country where different tenure systems and types of local government exist (tribal authorities). Denationalisation through independence may be a non-negotiable element but the regional devolution of state authority is almost universally regarded as a positive political trend, bringing government closer to the people. If one accepts regional government in this context and is prepared to acknowledge some of the very real achievements of Pretoria in establishing these functioning authorities then one has one carrot to offer the government. This would be on the clear understanding, however, that the goal of national alienation as achieved in independence is totally unacceptable. Thus there needs to be a much more vigorous debate about the future of the non-independent homelands, in which a position is developed accepting the relevance of the regional legislative structures but without accepting those structures as longer run alternatives to participation in the government of the Republic as a whole. The tendency among some opposition groups and overseas governments to eschew contact with non-independent homelands actually assists in the process of denationalisation because without support and political allies the homeland politicians become more vulnerable to the blandishments offered by the South African government in attempts to encourage the acceptance of independence.

More broadly, there is another context in which both non-independent regional authorities and the African local authorities can be seen. Democracy is problematic in Africa, not because of anything to do with Africans themselves but *inter alia* because the level of social and economic mobilisation and differentiation in the African societies is very low. The lack of organisation and differentiation means that there is little in typical African countries to constrain and check strong central authority. There is very little in the way of structures of participation between the mass of peasants and workers and the central political apparatus.

In South Africa this problem could be minimised in our future constitutional development if African local government and regional government could become strong and viable as lower tiers in a national constitutional structure. The interests of different local and regional formations are potentially sufficiently distinctive to provide for one of the important bases of democracy - "cross cutting cleavages" and a variety of competing socio-political structures. The holy cow of "one man one vote in a unitary system" must be confronted with the fact that it is neither the most common democratic system in the West and nor is it the most responsive to the needs of the communities.

One of the constitutional issues which will dominate debate over the next five years will be how to incorporate Africans into the parliamentary system. If the suggestion is made forcefully and often enough that it could be done effectively and with positive consequences for a future democracy by allowing representation to come to the centre via local and regional government then many people within the government camp may consider it more seriously. It will at least have the character of a demand around which negotiation is possible since it will avoid the connotations of a possible swamping of minority-group parties by concerted mass voting by the African majority.

Two reassurances are perhaps necessary. It will not be a system of representation in perpetuity. With African representation at the centre an interim constitutional arrangement would obviously mutate over time. It might be a form of transitional representation that a deeply divided society needs in order to narrow the conflict between groups. Secondly the suggestion excludes nobody. If accompanied by reassurances on African citizenship even progressive organisations may find it feasible to participate. Participation by such organisations is highly doubtful if viewed in a present context but political strategies are very fluid. In this connection it might be relevant to note that the P.L.O has no hesitation in participating in Arab local authority elections in Israel and the IRA similarly puts up candidates for elections in Ulster; both instances where

the political structures are captive of state authorities which are opposed by such organisations. There seems to be an undue sensitivity about participating in government structures in South Africa which may be counter-productive. The explanations for this are complex and not appropriately dealt with in this analysis. Suffice it to say, however, that the typical stances adopted in South Africa are in many ways counter productive.

Afrikaner ethnicity is the other major issue. If it is recognised that change to a more democratic society may be unduly protracted and could ultimately demand large scale bloodshed if formally protected Afrikaner ethnic interests are dismissed as inappropriate to a future South Africa, then it is only functional to take account of these interests in change strategies. South Africa would not by any means be the first country in which cultural or religious group interests have been formally or semi-formally built into a constitution. Belgium, the Netherlands, Lebanon, Austria, Canada, Nigeria and others exist or have existed to prove the utility of this element in the constitutions of divided societies. Here again there is a "non-negotiable" from the other side, however. Constitutional acknowledgement of the interests of one ethnic group does not mean that ethnic identity has to be imposed on other groups. It is the imposition of ethnic identity which is the factor which produces such dangerous alienation in our society and this has to be forcefully conveyed to the government.

I see a need, therefore, for those organisations pressing for the extension of the franchise to all South Africans to at least indicate what types of constitutional concessions to white group interests they might be prepared to make. Part of the impasse in South Africa lies in the fact that there is so little real debate taking place between the government and change organisations on these vital constitutional issues. There are constitutional options which combine an open democratic form with the protection of group interests for those ethnic groups which insist on such protection.

In conclusion I would like to point out that our greatest danger to peaceful conflict resolution in South Africa lies in the fact that the government with only few exceptions does not recognise black community leadership with sufficient popular support and legitimacy to represent and exercise control over black community action.

Blame for this can in large measure be laid at the door of the government. At the same time, however, it must also be conceded that much of the leadership which claims legitimacy and the allegiance of black communities is not elected and often self-appointed. Any government will hesitate to recognise leaders whose only claim to legitimacy is their rhetorical stance and sometimes their association with dissident factions of unknown size. For these reasons a peaceful resolution of our conflicts requires a change of attitude both on the part of the government and on the part of community leaders who hitherto have not exposed themselves to a process of community choice.

Of all the factors which weaken the thrust for change and reform in our society, however, perhaps the most important is the waving of small sticks by small groups or large sticks at a distance, while shouting messages which convey non-negotiable demands. This statement perhaps makes me sound like a wishy-washy conciliator. I would also add, however, that the greatest and most effective pressure for change will come from the black people themselves when they are organised into cohesive communities and constituencies with practical and clearly legitimate demands which cannot be dismissed as agitation. More pressure, not less, is required, but it must be tough pressure of the right kind.



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